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'Typical American'

Reluctantly, he opts for Ford

By Sue Treiman

IF YOU CAN COUNT on the typical American casting his typical ballot Nov. 2, here's what will happen, typically speaking:

President Ford will win by a narrow margin, thanks to millions of voters who will make up their minds to choose him on election eve as the "lessor of two evils." James Thompson will triumph over Democratic gubernatorial candidate Michael Howlett in a landslide, because voters fear having the state dominated by Daley Democrats, even though they admire Richard Daley, the man. There will be little interest in other state and local races, and voters will tend to stick with candidates they're familiar with in those contests.

THAT'S HOW RICHARD Johnson of Rolling Meadows, decreed in 1972 the "typical American voter" by the Public Affairs Center for Television in Washington, D.C., sees this year's campaign battles. His impressions of that campaign could easily have been used to predict those of the nation's electorate.

Johnson, a credit manager at National Steel Co., Evanston, was right on the money when he chose Richard Nixon for his vote, after spending time traveling with Democratic presidential hopeful George McGovern before the election. Johnson, a Democrat, crossed over and voted for Nixon because the McGovern camp was too disorganized in his view.

This year, Johnson anxiously watched the primaries worm their way across the continent, hoping that Hubert Humphrey or Ted Kennedy would be the party's standard bearer. "I know I wouldn't vote for Wallace, same for Carter," he said in February when several Democrats were still in the running. "They're from the South . . . it's partly because of racial problems."

TYPICALLY, THE millions of dollars spent by the candidates in recent months haven't really changed his mind. He favored Ford over Carter or Ronald Reagan in February and Thompson over Howlett or Gov. Walker.

A frustrated Democrat, Johnson said he'll once again "cross over" and cast his vote, somewhat reluctantly, for a Republican President this year. He admits that he "wanted to believe" in Jimmy Carter, but couldn't because the Georgian lacks experience and is "just not a sure thing."

"I don't want to take a chance on Carter. I don't like his lack of experience and his rapid rise to the top. People who rise that fast can drop just as fast," Johnson said.

BESIDES, HE ADDED, Ford has a better stand on the

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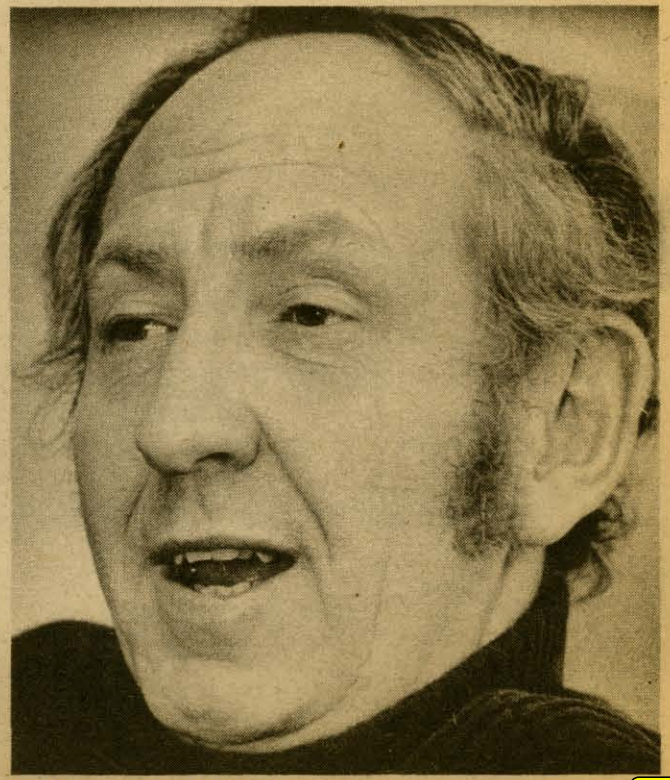

Johnson: bring back Humphrey

'Typical American' picks Ford

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defense budget, one of the most important issues facing America, in Johnson's view, and Ford has proven in the last two years that he can lead the country.

"Things aren't as bad as they were a year or so ago; the economy is stablizing," Johnson aid. "I can't see cutting the defense budget. I'm a taxpayer, but even if its costs me a little more, I believe we should fight strength with strength" by not cutting defense spending. Carter has suggested trimming the country's defense budget.

The "faux pas" of the campaign, the little [and big] slips both candidates made, have rolled off Johnson's back, and he's paying little attention to other things some political analysts considered pivotal: the candidates' religious feelings and their stands on abortion.

TO JOHNSON, Ford's "captive nations" statement [when he claimed during a debate that some eastern European nations weren't under communist domination] was a mistake, nothing more. It didn't change his feelings toward the candidate.

Nor did Jimmy Carter's interview with Playboy Magazine, where the candidate admitted he occasionally felt "lust" toward women, have an effect on his choice.

"A man's moral concerns are his own business," Johnson said. He said he doesn't believe the magazine is an improper forum for a candidate's views.

AND ABORTION and religion have no place in the presidential contests, Johnson said.

"Even if a candidate were Jewish it wouldn't really affect me," he said.

He says he is "personally against" abortion, except in cases where there are medical problems or where a rape is involved.

Johnson is convinced that the millions of undecided voters will evantually decide to keep Ford and will hand the Republican a slim victory over his challenger Tuesday.

WHEN THAT HAPPENS, he, and presumably other Americans, will be relieved that this "lackluster" campaign year has ended.

"It was a low-key campaign. I don't think either candidate is a dominating force. The debates didn't change my mind. I thought the last one was very boring," Johnson said.

It would have been different, he adds, if Humphrey or Kennedy had become the party's standard bearer.

"I would like to vote for a Democrat again," he said. But he added that he'll gladly wait four years.